



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts
730 Massachusetts Ave., Arlington, MA 02476
Phone: 781-316-3000

webmaster@town.arlington.ma.us

Parks and Recreation Minutes 02/10/2004

Park and Recreation Commission Minutes

Tuesday, February 10, 2004 - 7:00 p.m.

Approved Meeting Minutes

The meeting came to order at 7:00 PM.

Commissioners Present: Joseph Carabello, Thomas Caccavaro, Nancy Campbell, Leslie Mayer, and Donald Vitters

Staff Present: Jonathan Jalbert, Recreation Superintendent

Patsy Kraemer, Director of Human Services

Recording Secretary: Laura Munsey

Others Present: Mr. Michael Malone

Ms. Lisa Reale (Arlington Soccer Club)

1. Welcome and Approval of Minutes

Mr. Carabello welcomed the Commissioners and guests to the February 10, 2004 Park and Recreation Commission meeting.

Approval of 1/13/04 meeting minutes will be postponed until the March 9, 2004 meeting.

2. Approval of Recommended Program Fees - Recreation

Many factors have caused the need to raise program fees. The town will no longer supplement health insurance costs for personnel at the Recreation Division, and those charges are now the Recreation Divisions responsibility. Other fees that were previously funded by the town, i.e. postage, is now being billed to the Recreation Department. There were several buy-outs for past Superintendents who left and that cost was also charged to the Recreation Department. Operating expenses such as electricity have increased. The rent at the Gibbs is increasing, and grey billing and custodial fees by other departments have increased. Field user fees were cut by 50%. Reserves have been diminishing, and will need to be replenished to provide for any unexpected or emergency situations that may arise, such as when the Van was vandalized.

Ms. Mayer had previously e-mailed Mr. Jalbert questions about the fee proposal presented to the Park Commissioners regarding fee increases for summer programs. She inquired about the \$8,000 Park Beautification Fund Itemization. \$10,000 was identified in the Spring of 03 and there appears to be an excess of \$8,000. She inquired what the remaining balance was used for. Mr. Jalbert stated he would research this and provide a breakdown. Ms. Mayer asked if any research or comparison study has been done regarding other Towns Recreation Program Fees. Mr. Jalbert stated no formal study has been done, and if one is done, it should be done with Recreation Departments that are Enterprise Funds and are totally self-sustainable. Ms. Mayer questioned if any cost cutting measures have been taken. Mr. Jalbert responded that several cost cutting measures have been made such as little or no new purchasing of equipment and supplies. More in-house programs have been offered. Mr. Jalbert is also renegotiating contracts with all sub-contractors, to split the risk and cost if minimal numbers of participants enroll, and to ensure that administrative costs are applied, i.e. advertising and brochures, postage, registration, insurance, etc. Concern was expressed that by increasing fees it may make successful programs no longer successful, and some programs had large increases, i.e. Vacation Club. Currently, Vacation Club has a fee of \$21/day for a 7 hour program which runs from 9:00 to 3:00. Customers are charged \$3 per hour for a full day camp situation, and day trips are scheduled. Additionally, due to the nature of the program, a large number of special needs students attend, and coupled with the number of staff required to run it, this program currently runs at a loss. If the program fees cannot support the staff and expenses required to run it, it can no longer be run. Mr. Caccavaro inquired about the game plan if there is less interest in programs because of the increased fee. Mr. Jalbert said close evaluation will need to be done. We will learn by going through the process. This is our first pass, and the first time an in-depth evaluation has been done on actual costs

vs. program fees. In the case that numbers drop and programs are not meeting required numbers, we will either need to improve advertisement and selling of programs, including good public relations, and also add more to the programs to make them a better value. Ms. Campbell inquired about the \$4,800 administrative fee needed for softball, especially since many volunteers coach teams. Mr. Jalbert stated many hours go into running a successful softball program, including much planning time, permitting of fields, scheduling of games, purchasing of equipment and shirts, hiring and payroll for umpires, cori checks on volunteers, etc. Best estimates were used to determine the total number of planning hours, and operational hours it takes to successfully run each program. Every program was looked at individually, but the best way to apply the administrative fee to each program was to apply the fee to the total hours of operation of the programs.

A question was raised why field permitting for spring and fall took 416 hours, and Permitting for the Gibbs took 999 hours. Regarding the Gibbs administrative costs, many different private organizations, groups and schools, gym, athletic and recreation groups, and birthday parties are held weekly. Recreation staff runs the birthday parties. Each party requires billing, and custodial maintenance, which the Recreation Department is responsible for.

A Vote is requested this evening due to approval being needed by the Board of Selectmen and Town Meeting. To deal effectively with the current deficit, new fees should be implemented this summer.

Mr. Caccavaro expressed confidence in Ms. Kraemer, Mr. Jalbert, and the Staff Members who provided these numbers. He further stated that nobody wants to raise fees, however with the current financial situation the Recreation Department cannot continue to operate in a deficit.

MOTION (Made by Mr. Caccavaro, 2nd by Mr. Vitters)

MOTION TO ACCEPT THE FEE PROPOSAL AS PRESENTED BY MR. JALBERT, SUPERINTENDENT OF RECREATION, AND MS. KRAEMER, DIRECTOR OF HUMAN SERVICES, WITH THE STIPULATION THAT AN ANNUAL REVIEW BE PRESENTED TO THE PARK COMMISSIONERS, NEXT YEAR.

MOTION APPROVED 4-1

(Approved: Mr. Caccavaro, Ms. Campbell, Mr. Carabello, Mr. Vitters)

(Opposed: Ms. Mayer – Ms. Mayer stated “it was felt that excessive administrative fees are being assigned to programs, due in part to rounding up the estimated hourly rate, are problematic and questions remain on other income offsets and how administrative hours per program were determined”)

At the March 9th Meeting the Reservoir and Spray Pool Fee Proposal will be presented. Followed by the Rink fee proposal.

Due to the increased number of items on recent agendas, the Park Commissioners scheduled an interim Meeting on March 2, at 7:00 pm dedicated to Capital Projects.

3. Spy Pond Project Review.

Capital Plan Update: Mr. Vitters informed the Commission he negotiated with Larson Associates regarding any additional percentage costs or fees if Town Meeting chooses to appropriate the additional money to these proposed projects. Mr. Gary Larson agreed there will be no increase in fees. Prior to tonight’s meeting Mr. Larson had presented to Mr. Jalbert a draft contract, which Mr. Jalbert presented to Mr. Vitters. It is yet to be determined who will sign the contract, and Mr. Vitters will report back to the Commission.

Spy Pond Project Review: Mr. Vitters shared with the Commissioners presentation boards and diagrams of proposed improvements at Spy Pond. Changes have occurred since the preparation of the presentation boards however they provide an excellent overview of the site. Carol Johnson Associates worked on Robbins Farm Project, and has also been working on the Spy Pond Project. Spy Pond is a much more complicated project.

The Commission previously decided to design Spy Pond as 1 project rather than breaking it into 3 Phases. This was done as a cost-saving measure. If Town Meeting does not approve the additional money needed, the project will stop 2/3 of the way.

A concrete boat ramp will be installed. The shoreline edge will be treated and planted. Much of the previous plantings did not survive due to erosion and trampling. The plan is to protect the embankments by adding steps down to the sand area, which will also provide more access to the beach, and save the plantings. Fences will be installed around the plantings to protect them from damage. Signage will need to be posted (i.e. No Lifeguard). The path needs to be wide enough, covered with porous asphalt, for truck passage. Circular Benches will be installed. New access into the Playground will be designed, as well as new access to the bike path. Irrigation will be yard hydrants rather than sprinklers. The circle at Lindwood will be left in tact and in the same location, which will save approximately \$50,000. No major work will be done behind the fields. Roots have been evaluated on trees, and some pruning will take place. Drinking fountains will be installed. Freestanding signs regarding ecology and plant life may be placed throughout the park area, which may be done in collaboration with the Arlington schools and students. A drainage system will be installed from the bike path, slope, and Pond Lane. The drain will be at the base of slope and will discharge into the pond. Carole Johnson will relocate the drainage easement. New trees and shoreline plantings will be added. We will need Survey Plans, Material Plans, Planting Plan, Civil Engineering Plan, and Structural Engineering Plan. 3 Permits will be needed from: 1) Arlington Conservation Commission, 2) Chapter 91 permit from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and 3) an Endangered Species Permit for the umbrella sedge that is present. We would need to compensate for disturbed areas and can't alter the system. We hope to obtain a Negative Declaration of those areas.

MOTION (made by Leslie Mayer, 2nd by Nancy Campbell)

THE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION ACCEPTS THE PLANS FOR THE RENOVATION OF SPY POND, AS PRESENTED BY MR. VITTERS, ON FEBRUARY 10, 2004, WHICH TO DATE ARE 50% COMPLETE. THE COMMISSION APPROVES OF THIS WORK CONTINUING.

UNANIMOUS VOTE (5-0)

Mr. Vitters will share the new plans and recent approvals with the Friends of Spy Pond Committee. Mr. Jeff Theilman is the new President of the Friends of Spy Pond Committee.

4. Town's Role in Overseeing Capital Projects.

A discussion of who should be the Clerk of the Works for capital projects will be put on hold until the March 2nd Capital Planning Meeting. A representative from Public Works will be asked to attend this 3/2/04 meeting.

5. Committee Updates

Field Policy Committee: Mr. Jalbert met with the user groups, and asked for their permit requests and invited user groups to come in regarding potential conflicts. They had a discussion about Pierce Field regarding installation of Artificial Turf, and they hope to receive Park and Recreation Commission Support prior to Town Meeting. Pierce Field will be closing for renovation due to contamination of soil. The Town and the responsible parties have been working out an agreement which will be voted on at a Special Town Meeting. A protective cap will be placed on the area of contamination and a Practice Soccer Field will be created. Stands will be removed, and the entire recreation area will be dug up and repaired. Artificial Turf is recommended at the football field site, and new bleachers will be constructed, as well as a Press Box. Other possible renovations include Lights on the baseball fields, snack bar installed, and irrigation on Softball and Baseball Fields. This is dependent on the amount of funding left.

MOTION (made by Leslie Mayer, 2nd by Donald Vitters)

THE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION SUPPORTS THE PLANS PRESENTED THROUGH REMEDIATION TO INSTALL ARTIFICIAL TURF AT PEIRCE FIELD, TO SUPPORT ATHLETIC PROGRAMS FOR ALL THE RESIDENTS OF THE COMMUNITY.

VOTE: 4-1 IN FAVOR OF THE MOTION

AFFIRMATIVE: (Ms. Campbell, Mr. Carabello, Ms. Mayer, Mr. Vitters)

OPPOSED: (Mr. Caccavaro)

Mr. Caccavaro voted in opposition to this motion because he did not feel enough accurate

information was provided by the School Department to the Park and Recreation Commission regarding this project, and it was not made clear who would have access to the fields.

John Maher, the Legal Council for the Town, is looking at the Warrant Article regarding the permitting for temporary signage. A fee will most likely need to be charged for this permitting process, and possible legal issues will need to be looked into. Ms. Mayer and Mr. Caccavaro will work on this project with input from the user groups involved. One representative from Babe Ruth, Little League, Soccer, Lacrosse, and Pop Warner will be included. The Board of Selectmen will review the draft. If the Commissioners have any suggestions, comments, or changes they are encouraged to submit them to Ms. Mayer.

Sports Center Improvement Committee: Mr. Carabello, and Mr. Jalbert will inform the former SCIC of the decision by the Commission to disband, and their subsequent approval of forming a new sub-committee to look at long-range capital improvement recommendations at the Veterans Memorial Sports Center.

Open Space Committee: The Open Space Committee drafted a memo relative to the Symmes proposals. They are asking consideration of open space in the selection and award to the project. They have seen the signage warrant article and will be discussing it at the March meeting.

Friends Groups.

FOCCA talked to Kevin O'Brien and DEP regarding a Dog Park at McClennan Fields. DEP will not get involved until Arlington and the concerned Lexington parties have tried to reach a settlement.

Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park would like to discuss the possibility of installing a gate at the front of the Park. This idea will be forwarded to the DPW for further discussion.

Reservoir Committee. There will be an information meeting in April. Weston and Sampson expect limited tree loss.

Needs Assessment Sub-Committee. An RFP for a Recreational Needs Assessment is being prepared.

MOTION (made by Leslie Mayer, 2nd by Nancy Campbell)

THE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION SHALL ESTABLISH A TOWN WIDE RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT SUB-COMMITTEE THAT REPORTS TO THE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION. REPRESENTATIVES FROM VARIOUS RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS THROUGHOUT ARLINGTON WILL BE INCLUDED. MR. CACCAVARO WILL CHAIR THIS SUB-COMMITTEE.

VOTE UNANIMOUS (5-0) IN FAVOR OF THE MOTION.

5. Recreation and Rink Update

- a. Volunteer Credit Proposal. Will be presented at a later meeting.
- b. Special Events Permit Requests
 - 1. Jen Rothenburg, Friends of Robbins Farm request a field day permit for June 12, 2004 from 1-5 pm on the lower area, and use of the entire playground. Approximately 500 people.

MOTION (made by Leslie Mayer, 2nd by Donald Vitters)

THE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION APPROVES THE SPECIAL PERMIT REQUEST TO THE FRIENDS OF ROBBINS FARM TO HOLD A FIELD DAY ON JUNE 12, 2004 FROM 1:00 – 5:00 PM.

(Vote: Unanimous - 5-0 in favor of the motion)

2. Northern Knights, request a permit for a meeting to be held at Robbins Farm or other location for a meeting to be held at 4:00 in the morning on February 14, 2004, at a park and luminaries will be used. Approximately 8-10 people will be in attendance.

MOTION (made by Leslie Mayer, 2nd by Nancy Campbell)

THE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION DENIES THE REQUEST FOR A SPECIAL PERMIT FOR THE NORTHERN KNIGHTS ON FEBRUARY 14, 2004. THE PERMIT REQUEST IS DENIED DUE TO INSUFFICIENT NOTICE AND DESCRIPTION, REGARDING THE EVENT AND THE ORGANIZATION.

(VOTE: Unanimous 5-0 in favor of the motion)

8. Other Business.

Mr. Carabello would like the Commission to nominate a Vice-Chair. The Vice-Chair would not automatically be in line to become the next Chairperson the Commission.

MOTION (made by Nancy Campbell 2nd by Donald Vitters)

MR. THOMAS CACCAVARO IS HEREBY NOMINATED TO BE THE VICE-CHAIR OF THE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS (5-0) IN FAVOR OF THE MOTION.

A letter has been received from Senator Havern regarding the lease at the Veteran's Memorial Sports Center, and he forwarded the Town's letter to the appropriate parties.

The Commission adjourned at 11:00 pm